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ABSTRACT

Competency Process is a strategy designed for the Pennsyvania Department of Education for use in implementing competency based teacher education. Competency Process rests on the thesis that the most effective and humane way to institute change is to involve those affected in planning and implementation. It utilizes group techniques, inclusive abilities and collaborative judgments as part of its strategy. Competency Process is implemented in five non-sequential stages: a) competency definition; b) competency based program design; c) competency based program development; d) design of competency assessment; and e) certification and program approval. The critical components of Competency Process are not controlled by size, site, or stage of implementation. Competency Process is the emphasis on process toward product within a humanistic context, utilizing diverse skills, and stimulating the creative energies of those affected by the policy shift. (HMD)

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COMPETENCY PROCESS:

A STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

by

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COMPETENCY PROCESS:
A STRATEGY FOR PUBLIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

A Humanistic Strategy

Competency Process is a unique strategy for designing and implementing performance or competency based teacher education and evaluation. Competency Process may be considered a comprehensive strategy for implementing change in public policy within a variety of institutional settings.

Competency Process, conceptualized and field tested by Human Response Associates of Spring House, Pennsylvania, seeks to energize wide-spread creative abilities and to utilize representative constituent groups in designing of policy and in implementation. Initiating a network of activities, Competency Process attempts to engage the universe of people affected by change in a complex of formative roles.

Creative Involvement

The thesis on which Competency Process rests is that the most effective and humane way to institute change is to involve those affected in planning and implementation. While this concept itself is not new, its applications in public policy situations have been few. Competency Process conceptualizes and systematizes this application.

The utilization of group techniques, inclusive abilities and collaborative judgments, is the organizational style of Competency Process. At the same time there is a basic respect for the individuality and the integrity of each person engaged with the policy change. Competency Process organizes change through a complex network of activities to involve each individual in a responsible and responsive role.

HRA: Conceptualization

The role of HRA in Competency Process is not to define competencies or to specify performance. Rather it is, while being responsive to an evolving process and responsible to a concept of how to implement public policy, to act as a creative and conscientious facilitator.

This role has two aspects, one developmental and the other continuing. First, HRA developed the concept in its philosophical outline and ideological base and its programatic components and particulars. Second, HRA has a continuing role the dimensions of which are:

- to research and to diagnose unique institutional and process dynamics,
- to conceptualize the overall strategy for implementing competency or performance based teacher education or instruction at a variety of particular sites and situations,
- to protect collaborative and creative operating modes at all stages of the development,
- to provide an array of resolution activities which could include training seminars and leadership workshops,
- to organize supporting activities such as data processing and information dissemination networks, and research and editorial services,
- to manage the process of generating evolving definitions of competency and performance,
- to facilitate the flow of planning and design within the parameters of the implementing universe.

The concept and resultant strategy of Competency Process and the continuing role of HRA as creative facilitator have been operationalized in field site situations. This experience has provided a real-world test of the overall concept, and it has offered the opportunity to perfect the particulars. Also, this experience has produced a group of professional practitioners highly skilled in the application of Competency Process.

The Growth of HRA Capability

Competency Process is applicable in a variety of institutional and geographic settings from state-wide to local school district and from legislative committee or governing board to a college of education. The recent example of this application in Pennsylvania illustrates its conceptual core and its unique adaptability. Pennsylvania has been one of the first states to institute CBTE. This change in how to define what it means to be a teacher has been facilitated by the creative strategies of HRA's Competency Process. Implementation in Pennsylvania was initiated state-wide, and, while the following references are couched in "state" terms, Competency Process is a general strategy for public policy initiation and implementation in a variety of institutional or geographic environments.

The Example of Pennsylvania

In 1970 the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) initiated the conversion to competency based teacher education by asking the 83 state approved programs to describe their teacher training programs in competency terms. The definitions and redefinitions produced descriptions of widely varying detail and concept. In the fall of 1972, a state conference of state educators held in Harrisburg urged the development of an inventory of competencies as a tool for program design, and in 1973, the task was made clearer when a meeting of representatives of the 83 Pennsylvania teacher training institutions defined the immediate concern as program-relevant competencies "generic to entry level teaching at all levels."

HRA: *Facilitator*

At this point, PDE decided to go outside the Department for facilitation by inviting HRA, a group of professionals

and practitioners in education, program evaluation, psychology and mental health, to conceptualize a process or a strategy to translate the particularistic and heterogeneous statements into an accepted initial inventory of entry level generic teaching competencies.

HRA, while not involved in the initial request to the 83 colleges and universities, was thus faced with the immediate, and in certain respects routine, task of making some systematic sense out of the many program statements. This particular task would not necessarily be present in other state-wide implementation efforts nor in institution or school district development of competency based instruction, nor did it reflect the larger implementation in Pennsylvania. Consequently, HRA approached its task in its fullest dimensions, first conducting preliminary field research to identify the situational dynamic impinging CBTE implementation. This research involved legal and other document review, statistical studies, and interviewing of key informants. Second, on the basis of these findings HRA developed with officials in the Department of Education a detailed, long-range strategy for implementating CBTE.

Five Stages of Implementation

HRA saw CBTE implementation in Pennsylvania falling into five non-sequential stages over a 10 year period following the preliminary stage of formal authorization to implement CBTE:

Stage I - Competency Definition

Stage II - Competency-Based Program Design

Stage III- Competency-Based Program Development

Stage IV - Design of Competency Assessment

Stage V - Certification and Program Approval

These five stages, while they had immediate relevance to Pennsylvania, have general application to any state undertaking implementation of CBTE, though in each state discrete institutional or process characteristics dictate a site-specific configuration of components.

Data Processing: A Preliminary Task

In the example of Pennsylvania, screening the competency defined profiles from the 83 teacher training institutions was a situationally necessary preliminary task in data processing. It meant reading through approximately 50,000 competencies and locating those statements which were generic. Generic competencies were defined as "those common to all teaching regardless of subject or level." For the HRA research staff, the next step in the process was the reduction of the material submitted by colleges and universities by identifying terminal and enabling objectives, eliminating duplicates, and selecting the generic. Thus the 50,000 statement became 4,000. These might have been grouped under traditional curricular headings, but the items seemed to fall more naturally into three large comceptual divisions:

- o Attributes: the traits teachers should possess
- o Cognitions: the things all teachers should know
- o Skills: the things all teachers should be able to do

With the items sorted and reduced to three conceptual groups, HRA turned its attention to those people who would evaluate,

accept, reject, rewrite or originate competency statements. The product of this process became the Pennsylvania Interim Inventory of Generic Teacher Competencies.

Competency Process, however, is not a product, it is a way of arriving at the product. The implementing system must be governed by the maximum involvement of the most people in responsible work or decisional activities, and this must be true throughout the time and space dimensions within the universe of those affected.

Maximum Involvement: Leadership Training and Workshop

HRA decided that the task of developing an accepted Interim Inventory could be realized through a general, state-wide workshop involving a representative group of school and college teachers and administrators, state Department of Education administrators, and citizens with no specialized "client" group other than the general public. The workshop scheme emphasized product growing out of the concerted and calculated involvement of each of the 400 participants. To manage both the size of the group and the complexity of the task, those invited to the workshop met in small groups. Each small group was led by two colleagues who had undergone previous specialized preparation and who in fact had had an important part in planning the general workshop. These fifty-two group leaders had been chosen four months in advance from the 83 teacher training colleges and universities. This group participated in two three-day planning and training seminars. Though many of them had had some training and experience, the seminars had twin thrusts, competency based instruction, and group process and leadership skills.

The processing of heterogeneous program descriptions and the subsequent leadership seminars and the competency

workshop give a clearer image of some of the activities recommended in the original HRA Diagnosis. These particulars of scheduling and design had validity in the particular Pennsylvania environment and at a certain stage of development.

Size, Site and Stage of Policy Implementation

The application of Competency Process may take place at any stage of policy implementation from original conceptualization and formal authorization through the sequence of implementation steps. Likewise, a variety of implementation jurisdictional or institutional settings are receptive to the creative strategies of competency process. An independent school district may as usefully employ these strategies as a large university school of education or a state-wide association of teachers.

The critical components of Competency Process are not controlled by size, site or stage of implementation. It is the emphasis on process toward product within a humanistic context, utilizing diverse skills, and stimulating the creative energies of those affected by the policy shift. This is the heart of Competency Process.